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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 DAR ES SALAAM 000772

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR AF/E

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SUBJECT: Zanzibar's Voter Registration Crisis: the Diplomatic Group Responds

Classified by Pol-Econ Chief Judy Buelow for reason 1.4(b)

REF: A) Dar es Salaam 732, B) Dar es Salaam 711, C) Dar es Salaam 551, D) Dar es Salaam 538

1. (C) Summary: As voter registration on Zanzibar enters its final week, evidence continues to mount that government interference with the registration process is blatant, deliberate and sufficiently widespread to affect electoral outcomes. Opposition supporters who have been denied registration include the CUF party candidate for President of Zanzibar, Seif Sharif Hamad. On April 15, a group of donor country diplomats who have assisted Zanzibar's voter registration project met to discuss next steps to salvage the integrity of the voters register. The diplomatic group drew up a list of talking points that emphasized support for the Zanzibar Electoral Commission (ZEC), and respect for the legally established procedures for voter registration. During the week of April 18-22, teams of diplomats from the group will deliver this message to a cross section of top political leaders, urging them to allow the ZEC to proceed with voter registration without interference. End Summary.

Widespread Disregard for Registration Procedures

2. (U) On April 15, the domestic election observation NGO "TEMCO," circulated its most recent report on Zanzibar's voter registration, confirming persistent, widespread disregard for the legal voter registration procedures in Zanzibar's populous Urban West Region. TEMCO's report is consistent with the problems that diplomatic observers, including emboff, had seen the previous week in Urban West. (Please see Reftel B for a detailed discussion.) By law, the highest ranking ZEC official at a center determines who is eligible to register. Local government administrators, called "shehas" may advise the ZEC officials, but the sheha have no legal authority to refuse registration to anybody.

3. (U) TEMCO noted that in many centers, however, the sheha alone decided who was eligible to register, in contravention of the law. TEMCO and the diplomatic observers saw many people turned away from the centers without having the opportunity even to speak with an official from the ZEC, or to file a "form 2-D" documenting the refusal. Without this form, no individual can appeal the refusal to higher levels of the ZEC or to the courts. This massive disregard for legal registration procedures is occurring against a background of increasing violence and intimidation. In several incidents, armed thugs have beaten people who were waiting outside registration centers. Arson attacks on homes and factories have proliferated since registration began in Urban West.

Disenfranchisement of the Opposition

4. (U) TEMCO coordinator Rwekaza Mukandala and many other observers conclude that the shehas are acting on instructions from their superiors in the Zanzibar government to limit registration by members of the opposition CUF party. On April 14, the CUF Secretary General and candidate for the Presidency of Zanzibar, Seif Sharif Hamad was himself refused registration, on the grounds that he had not resided continuously on Zanzibar for the requisite 36 months. (Hamad maintains a house on Zanzibar, but he also spends considerable time in Dar or traveling overseas, as do most political leaders.) CUF held a mass rally in Dar es Salaam April 16, to protest problems with registration. Hamad told the rally that the CUF had lost all confidence in the ZEC's ability to conduct free and fair elections next October, and that CUF agents would tabulate election results independently and announce them without waiting for the ZEC. The CUF party claims that 32,000 of its supporters have

been denied registration in Urban West. While we cannot confirm this figure independently, TEMCO's observations suggest that it might not be far from the mark.

The Diplomatic Group's Strategy

15. (C) On April 15, UNDP Resident Representative John Hendra convened Heads of Diplomatic Missions representing the donors that are supporting the Zanzibari electoral process. Charge Chris Stillman represented the US Embassy; the UK, Netherlands, Canada, Norway, Sweden, Germany and the EU also sent representatives. The diplomats' consensus was that the credibility of Zanzibar's Permanent Voters Registry, and ultimately the election, was in jeopardy. The diplomats thought that the ZEC was competent and committed to conducting free and fair elections. Given a free hand, and perhaps a bit more time to make up for lost ground, the ZEC could yet salvage the integrity of the voters register. The ZEC could succeed in doing so, however, only if top leaders in the Zanzibar government could be persuaded to halt what looks very much like a concerted campaign to manipulate voter registration.

16. (C) Following the pattern established during previous difficulties with voter registration, the diplomats agreed on common message, then decided which political leaders needed to hear it. The diplomat's eleven-point message can be summarized as follows: we support the ZEC in its endeavor to establish a credible voter register, and we urge all other parties to refrain from interfering with the ZEC. The message urges all stakeholders to show restraint and to discourage violence.

17. (C) On April 19, the High Commissioners from the UK and Canada planned a series of meetings on Zanzibar, to be followed by a previously planned meeting between the Nordic Ambassadors and Zanzibar President Karume on April 20. During these meetings, the diplomats will approach Zanzibari government leaders who are part of the problem: Karume, Chief Minister Nahodha, Acting Minister for Good Governance Shamhuna, and CCM Treasurer (and Karume brother in law) Mansoor Himid. They will also approach political leaders who are potentially part of the solution, including Tanzanian Home Affairs Minister Mapuri (a Zanzibari who helped negotiate the original Muafaka Accord) the Secretaries General of both the CCM and the CUF parties, and ZEC Chairman Masauni. On April 21, the diplomatic group will re-convene to assess the situation, and decide if the timing is right to take their concerns to the highest level, President Mkapa. After May 4, when the ruling CCM party announces its candidate for the Presidency, the Diplomatic Group may also seek a meeting with the nominee to emphasize the importance of credible elections on Zanzibar.

18. (C) For the week of April 18-22, while voter registration continues on Zanzibar and while CCM leaders focus on their internal campaign, the diplomats' message will be urgent, but private. For now, the Diplomatic Group will refrain from press releases, cancellation of assistance programs or any other threatened sanctions that could provoke a backlash or strengthen CCM hardliners. The consensus among the Diplomatic Group was that the ZEC would have a better chance to do its work to salvage the register if the CCM hardliners were given room to back down without a loss of face.

19. (C) During their discussions with Tanzanian political leaders, the Diplomatic Group will draw on the following eleven points:

-- As supporters of the Muafaka, we come as "Friends of Zanzibar" and indeed as Friends of Tanzania.

-- The Diplomatic Group is extremely concerned about aspects of the ongoing registration process, especially actions by Shehas that appear to have denied large numbers of people the opportunity to register, and about indications of multiple registration in some areas.

-- A credible voters register is critical to the conduct of a peaceful and credible election on Zanzibar.

-- Peaceful and credible elections are fundamental to maintaining stability in Zanzibar.

-- If the elections are not peaceful and credible,

there could be serious consequences affecting Zanzibar's economy, including tourism.

-- The Diplomatic Group is concerned that the ZEC be enabled to uphold the credibility of the registration process and to ensure the integrity of the Permanent Voters Register.

-- The Diplomatic Group is seriously concerned about the increase in elections-related violence, and by the provocative actions by all sides, and strongly urges all sides to act and speak with restraint.

-- The Diplomatic Group encourages dialogue among all political parties, and urges that the Secretary Generals' Committee be re-activated as a forum for inter-party dialogue.

-- While the Shehas have a role in the electoral process, it is of utmost importance that they fulfill their stipulated roles and responsibilities in strict accordance with the electoral laws.

-- The ZEC has considerable technical competence and an impressive record of accomplishments to date. The ZEC must be allowed to undertake its responsibilities in an impartial manner, and to do its job free of political interference and intimidation.

-- Every opportunity must be found to ensure that all eligible voters who wish to register are able to do so.

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